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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #3834/01 3170916
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 130916Z NOV 06
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3002
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 5924
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 7143

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 003834

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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD - DAVID FIRESTEIN
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

11. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused their coverage November 10-13 on the aftermath of the prosecutor's indictments of First Lady Wu Shu-chen and three Presidential aides in early November; on the first televised debates among the Taipei mayoral candidates Sunday; and on follow-on investigations into the Presidential allowance for state affairs case. Former Academia Sinica President Lee Yuan-tseh and Former Presidential Office Secretary General Chen Shih-meng, both close friends of President

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Chen Shui-bian, over the weekend openly urged President Chen to step down. The pro-unification "United Daily News" ran a banner headline November 13 on page two that read "Blue and Green Each Has Its Own Intent; Osting Bian Has Become an Imminent Consensus." In addition, the media reported November 13 that two DPP legislators have announced their resignation effective this week because they think their party's handling of President Chen's case has failed to respond appropriately to Taiwan society's expectations.

12. Most Taiwan dailies continued to editorialize on President Chen's allowance for state affairs case and his and the DPP's political future. Several commentaries and editorials tended to compare Chen's future with the results of the U.S. mid-term elections. A "United Daily News" column urged Taiwan voters to wake up and vote against the DPP, as the U.S. voters did vis-a-vis the Republican Party. An analysis in the pro-status quo "China Times" said the political earthquake caused by the U.S. mid-term elections has sounded a death knell for the Republican Party. The article also urged Taiwan not to nurture any wishful thinking about future U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, because even though she may love Taiwan, she will not embrace a corrupt Taiwan leader. An editorial in the limited-circulation, conservative, pro-unification "China Post" also compared President Chen with President Bush and urged Taiwan voters to use their ballots to let Chen know their decision. An editorial in the limited-circulation, pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times," however, said the results of the U.S. mid-term elections will have very little impact on U.S.-Taiwan relations. End summary.

A) "The United States Wakes Up, While Taiwan Remains Asleep?"

The "Black and White" column in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/10):

"The 'George W. Bush's lies' have been exposed, followed by disillusionment with the 'George W. Bush myth.' It is globally acknowledged that the severe defeat of the U.S. Republican Party in the mid-term elections stems from the fact that voters have cast a no-confidence vote against Bush. There were two means Bush adopted that were behind his ascendancy after the September 11 tragedy: One was that he chose a foreign enemy, Saddam Hussein, to inflame the American people's sense of justice and desire for revenge. Second, he took advantage of [the slogan of] 'anti-terrorism' to uphold

'national security' as the highest criterion for judging political right and wrong, in an attempt to suppress criticism in the United States. ...

"Bush has used the war in Iraq and the war on terrorism to build an autocratic position for himself. But last week's mid-term elections showed that the American people who had once crazily supported Bush's war in Iraq have now exposed his lies and spurned this populist politician after 3,000 American soldiers and 600,000 Iraqis died in the war in Iraq! ... American voters did not buy Bush's story, but will Taiwan voters buy Chen Shui-bian's story? The United States can, but Taiwan cannot? The United States has woken up, but does Taiwan still remain asleep?"

B) "Political Earthquake of the Mid-term Elections Sounds the Death Knell of the Republican Party"

Washington correspondent Norman Fu noted in the "Washington Outlook" column in the pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 400,000] (11/10):

"... President George W. Bush immediately fired universally loathed Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld following the mid-term elections, replacing him with former Central Intelligence Agency Director Robert Gates. Bush reluctantly let his confidant Rumsfeld go, and this is a price that the Democratic Party and future U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi demanded of him. All Bush could do was to send his favored right hand man who launched the war in Iraq to the altar as a sacrifice following the elections. ... One need not look far for a lesson; [Taiwan] must not nurture any wishful thinking about [future U.S. House Speaker Leader] Nancy Pelosi. One must know that Pelosi is a vanguard against Republican corruption. How could she possibly like and embrace a Taiwan leader who is used to telling lies every day and who is corrupt by nature? ... It may be true that Pelosi loves Taiwan, but it is definitely not Chen Shui-bian whom she loves."

C) "Can President Chen Learn from Bush's Defeat?"

The conservative, pro-unification, English-language "China Post" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (11/13):

"George W. Bush's defeat at the polls on Tuesday should have surprised nobody. Although his name was not on the mid-term election, the election was all about him - a referendum on his leadership, in general, and his war in Iraq, in particular. After six years in the White House, Bush has proved one thing: he is perhaps one of the worst American presidents since World War II, if not of all time. He has made lives miserable for both Americans and Iraqis. ...

"Like his American counterpart, President Chen is also famous for his hubris, fickleness, and chicaneries. Although his name is not on the ballot for next month's election, the election is all about him - a referendum on his integrity and performance. America's mid-term election has proven one thing: that the American people are no longer stupid, at least not as stupid as Bush and his top political strategist, Karl Rove, had presumed. Are voters in Taiwan getting smarter? We'll have the answer next month."

D) "Don't Bother Reading US Tea Leaves"

The pro-independence, English-language "Taipei Times" [circulation: 30,000] editorialized (11/10):

"Political analysts look for changes in the Taiwan-US relationship after even the most insignificant events, so it is not surprising that they will jump into overdrive after a major development such as the US midterm election. ... So when the usual commentators start putting their cutting insights into print, telling us how the US election is good for the pan-blues, or good for the pan-greens, for good for Taiwan, or bad for Taiwan, or whatever their formulation might be, we would do well to remember that the election will probably have very little impact on US-Taiwan relations. There are manifold reasons for this, but primarily it is because Taiwan is on the periphery of political debate in the U.S. American voters and

politicians are worried about a lot of things, but on the whole, Taiwan isn't foremost among them. ...

"The common ideological thread that most of these people share, however, is support for Taiwan's right to self-determination. That support will continue so long as Taiwanese show that they are interested in their own future. This is why US State Department isn't interested in taking sides in the current brouhaha over the president. From the US' point of view, it is immaterial which Taiwanese political party or faction has the upper hand from week to week. The important question relates to process. There is a vast difference between red-clad rabble-rousers bringing down the president using mob rule, and a prosecutor bringing down the president using legal means. The more rabid extremists may not see this, but we must hope that these people remain where they belong: on the fringe of popular opinion. And if that happens, there may come a way when people here are confident enough in their own system of government that they no longer need to seek affirmation from a staid foreign bureaucrat speaking from a podium."

YOUNG